

# ***A study of the Singapore sports council library in post-colonial and post-war Singapore, 1974-2014: Issues and challenges in the provision of information sources in sport and leisure***

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## **ABSTRACT**

*There was no known record of sports libraries in Singapore during British (1819-1941; 1946-1959) and Japanese (1942-1945) colonial rule. After Singapore became a sovereign island city state in 1965, the government established the Singapore Sports Council (SSC) in 1973. The SSC's library, the first specialised sports library, was founded the following year. The research methodology consisted mainly of studying the Council's annual reports (1973-2012), seven published library survey responses (1975, 1983, 1989, 1993, 1996, 2000 and 2006) and 40 visits to the Library over a two-year period to physically look at its collection. The research findings suggest that there were three phases of development. The first phase is from 1974 to 1997 when the Library grew rapidly under the as part of the Information and Research Division. During the second phase of 1998 to 2010 the Library was under Management Services. It began to automate its library system by subscribing to CARL Information Management and Delivery System. During the years 2010 to April 2014 the Library was shifted to a temporary location after the National Stadium was demolished to build the Sports Hub. Its bounded serials collection was kept in a warehouse, including many books which were not accessible to users. The reconfigured Library branded as Singapore Sports Hub Library, with five times larger floor space, than the previous library, is expected to be opened at its new venue in June 2014. Recommendations were made to the staffing, collection development and the provision of services to the new Library.*

**Keywords:** Special Library; Sport Library; Physical Education; Newspaper Cuttings; Library Automation System

## **INTRODUCTION**

Prior to the establishment of the Singapore Sports Council (SSC) library in 1974 there was no known record of a sports library in Singapore (Keeth 1965; Lim 1969; Lim 1970). The SSC's sports library was the first to be set up in Singapore after its post-colonial and post-war history (Lim 1975, 107). This research attempts to study the history and development of this sports library in areas of staffing, collection development, types of



users, provision of services, including certain attributes that makes it unique from other special libraries. It also tries to put a case for the importance of studying information sources in sport and leisure for a country that promotes mass sports participation as well as sports excellence to win Olympic gold medals. The researchers studied the annual reports of the Council (1974-2012) and survey responses published in the seven *Directories of Libraries in Singapore* from 1975 to 2006 (Lim 1975; Sng 1983; Foo and Lim 1989; Cheng 1993; Lim-Yeo 1996; Koh and Choy 2000; Lim-Yeo 2006). Moreover, the researchers physically made 40 visits to the Library from February 2012 to March 2014 to browse and study the Library's book and serial collection.

### **Founding of the Singapore Sports Council Library (1974-2014)**

Singapore was under British colonial rule from 1819 to 1941. The Japanese occupied the island from 1942 to 1945 (Thio 1991, 95). The island became a British colony again from 1946 to 1959. From the years 1955 to 1959 the post-war Singapore constitution was written to transfer a large measure of power to local administrators. A state election was held in 1959 and the People's Action Party (PAP) won to be a fully elected government under a new constitution. The Federation of Malaysia consisting of Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak and North Borneo (renamed Sabah) came into being on September 1963 (Yeo and Lau 1991).

On 9 August 1965 Singapore left Malaysia and became an independent sovereign nation (Ministry of Culture 1965, 10-11). The National Sports Promotion Board (NSPB) was officially formed on February 1971 as a statutory board to promote sports in the Republic (NSPB 1971, 6). The Singapore Sports Council (SSC) came into being on 1 October 1973. The Singapore Sports Council Act repealed the National Sports Promotion Board Act 1970 and the National Stadium Corporation Act 1971. The main functions of the SSC were:

1. To promote recreational and competitive sport.
2. To coordinate sports activities from schools to national level.
3. To develop and maintain sports facilities (SSC 1973, 12).

In the UK, the Sports Council, was established in 1972 by Royal Charter, to develop sport and recreation in the interests of social welfare and the enjoyment of leisure, to encourage the provision of new facilities and stimulate use of existing facilities, and to encourage high standards. Its primary objective is to increase participation and performance (Torkilsen 1992, 65). There appeared to be some similarities with the objectives of the Sports Council in the UK and Singapore.

### **First phase of development (1974 – 1997)**

The Singapore Sports Council (SSC) Library was established in 1974 with 1,180 books and 100 periodical titles (Lim 1975, 107). The Library was well used by staff and members of the Singapore Physical Education Association (SPEA), coaches, members of the National Sports Associations (NSAs), and the armed forces. Students of the Institute of Education used the library for research purposes. The SSC Library is part of the Information and Research Division that served as a focal point for the receipt, exchange and dissemination of sports and related information, both verbal and written (SSC 1977, 30 - 31).



In 1983 the library's collection expanded with 7,700 books, 172 journals, 88 16-mm films, 34 loop films, 13 video tapes and 5 sets of slides (SSC 1983a, 39). In 1974 the library had a "qualified" library staff who was a member of the American Library Association (ALA) but do not have a library qualification (Lim 1975, 107). In 1983 SSC began to employ a library technician with City and Guilds qualification, and, another clerical staff to run the library (Sng 1983, 144). The SSC Library falls into Prytherch's (2002, 687) criteria of a special library. It is a library maintained by a statutory board with a limited field of knowledge serving the needs of a portion of the community. The limited field of knowledge refers to information relating to sports and leisure and it community of sports amateur and professionals and enthusiasts and fans. In 1982 the SSC's Information and Division had a Sports Library, Sports Museum, Sports magazine and research department to carry out the task (SSC 1983b, 69).

### **Contacts with international documentation centres**

The library maintained regular contacts with international documentation centres like the Council of Europe Clearing House (Belgium), the Sport Information Resource Centre (Canada), the National Documentation Centre (United Kingdom) and the Australian Clearing House for Publications in Recreation, Sport and Tourism (Australia). Through the exchange of publications, the SSC was able to keep abreast with new trends and developments in sports and physical education in other countries (SSC 1984, 53).

### **School of PE at the Institute of Education (IoE)**

The College of Physical Education was set up in 1984 as part of the Institute of Education (IoE) and admitted its first batch of student to the two-year Diploma of Physical Education (PE) in July the same year (Institute of Education 1985, 2). The College planned an annual enrolment of 100 pupils each year. The main purpose of the College was to train specialist teachers of PE for secondary schools and Junior Colleges (JCs) (Institute of Education 1986, 53). Many of the pupils and staff of the College became members of the SSC Library because of the comprehensive collection of sports books.

### **Shifting to new premises in 1986**

In order to cope with the expansion of the library, it moved to a larger premise in May 1986 to enable to house the increasing collection of audio-visual materials (SSC 1987, 50). In 1987 the library had 11,454 books, 258 periodicals, 345 video tapes, 109 16mm films, and 200 publications about the NSAs and Constituency Sports Clubs. About 160 files on various sport subjects were created in the library for reference purposes. The main users of the libraries continued to be PE teachers and students, sports officials, coaches and athletes (SSC 1988, 52).

### **Integrated Library Management System**

The library was closed from 1 December 1993 to 31 March 1994 for relocation to its new premises (SSC 1994, 46). The library was located to the main lobby of the SSC in February 1994 to make it more physically accessible to its users. An integrated library management system, IMAGE II, was acquired in December 1994. The system consisted



of six fully-integrated modules on cataloguing and enquiry, loan and circulation, acquisition and budgeting, item control, serial management and MARC interface. Two on-line (OPAC) terminals were available to users to access information in the library's collection. The library automation programme was completed by October 1995. The library also subscribed to the Internet via Technet (SSC 1995, 42).

Table 1: Survey results of the Singapore Sports Council library in 1974, 1982, 1989 and 1993

1974	1982	1989	1993
<b>Library personnel</b>			
Lim Bee Eng ALA (Library officer)	Lily Poh City & Guilds, Asst. Cert. (Library Technician I)	Lily Poh City & Guilds, Asst. Cert. (Executive Officer)	Lily Poh City & Guilds, Asst. Cert. (Library Technician I)
1 qualified librarian 1 other	1 library technician 1 other	1 library technician 1 other	1 qualified librarian 2 others
<b>Membership</b>			
Staff and office bearers of NSAs; Users: NA	Staff and members Users: 100	Staff and members Users: NA	Staff and members Users: NA
<b>Opening hours</b>			
Weekdays: 8.30 a.m.– 4.30 p.m. Saturdays: 8.30 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.	Weekdays: 8.30 a.m.– 5.00 p.m. Saturdays: 8.30 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.	Weekdays: 8.30 a.m.– 5.00 p.m. Saturdays: 8.30 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.	Weekdays: 8.30 a.m.– 5.00 p.m. Saturdays: 8.30 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.
<b>Inter-library loan: local</b>			
<b>Document delivery</b>			
Nil	Nil	local	Nil
<b>Collection</b>			
General, sports, physical and health	Sports, physical fitness	Sports and recreation	Sports and recreation
Books: 1,810 volumes	Books: 6,697 volumes	Books: 12,055 volumes	Books: 14,300 volumes
Periodicals: 100 titles	Periodicals: 149 titles	Periodicals: 260 titles	Periodicals: 275 titles
Non-print: Nil	88 films	Films, audio and video cassettes	Films, audio and video cassettes
<b>Classification: Wingate Institute of Physical Education and Sport</b>			
<b>Catalogue</b>			
Author/title; subject	NA	NA	Author/title; subject

\*NA = Not Available

Sources: Lim 1975, 107; Sng 1983, 144; Foo and Lim 1989, 176; Cheng 1993, 14.

The period of rapid growth of the library was from the years 1974 to 1989. Its collection of books increased from 1,810 volumes in 1974 to 6,697 in 1982 as compiled in Table 1. About one thousand books were added to the Library's collection from 1982 to 1989. There was a total of 14,300 books in 1993 (Cheng 1993, 14, Table 1) The periodicals also increased more than two-fold from 100 titles in 1974 to 260 titles in 1989. To make a comparison, the British Sports Council's Information Centre in London had an extensive reference library containing approximately 20,000 documents and 350 to 400 periodicals. The centre provided services for its own staff, leisure professionals, students and the general public, by answering personal, written and telephone enquiries. The



library covers such topics as administration, finance, management facilities and economics (Torkildson 1992, 66).

### **The Library 2000 report: provision of sources of information in sport and leisure**

In 1994 the Ministry of Information and the Arts published a report of the Library 2000 Review Committee (1994) to recommend six strategic trusts in developing a total library service. They are:

1. To develop a new three tier public library system linking with academic, school and public libraries. The three tier public library system consists of five regional libraries, 18 community libraries and 100 neighbourhood libraries.
2. To build a network of borderless libraries, linking all publicly funded libraries and leading libraries with access to information services 24 hours a day.
3. To build a co-ordinated National Collection Strategy "to avoid uneconomical duplication and to achieve greater returns to investment".
4. To provide higher standards of quality service through market orientation and revitalizing the library's image.
5. To build symbiotic linkages with business and the community.
6. To enable Singapore to play a prominent role in the knowledge arbitrage process.

In view of the growing interest in healthy lifestyles and sports, the Committee recommended that the National Library Board (NLB) encouraged the SSC to expand its Library to serve a wider group of enthusiasts. It should be linked to the specialised collections in the College of Physical Education and be part of the public library system. The Regional and Community Libraries should provide a more general sports collections to complement the Sports Library's specialised collection (Review Committee 1994). Although the recommendations of the Committee did not materialise due to the lack of leadership and interest, the SSC library is recognised as the only specialised sports library as well as the leading sports library in Singapore.

In 1995 the Library's collection amounted to 15,800 books, 305 journals and 800 video tapes. It was also reported that the Library maintained a collection of 750 newspaper clipping files on local and international events. In addition, a special collection of information files on sports development in Southeast Asia was compiled for reference (SSC 1996, 39).

### **Singapore Integrated Library Automation System (SILAS)**

Singapore Integrated Library Automation System (SILAS), a national bibliographic utility, was launched in 1987. Its library automation system provides an integrated resource sharing system through cooperative cataloguing. SILAS utilizes the Western Library Network (WLN) software to operate its services. Since its launching, it has drawn 32 participants including the six major tertiary institution libraries. As of April 1992 the SILAS database contains a total of 6,037,816 records. (Yap 1993, 88-89). The SSC Sports Library was accepted as a provisional participant in SILAS in July 1994. Since then, its holdings had been downloaded in stages to the SILAS database (SSC 1995, 42). More than 3,500 records were added to the SILAS database during the years 1995 and 1996. The Library was contributing to the national bibliographic database (SSC 1996, 39). This



was also a testimony that the Library had unique and rare collection of books not available in other libraries in Singapore. (SSC 2000, 50).

**Second phase of development, 1998 - 2009: implementation of library automation system**

In 1998 the SSC was reorganised and the Library was one of the five departments under Management Services. The other departments were Information Technology (IT), Research, Sports Museum and internal audit. To provide sports researchers and sports scientists with better bibliographic access to sports related information, the library subscribed to SPORT DISCUS, a bibliographic database on CD-ROM produced by the Sports Information Resource Centre (SIRC) (SSC 1999, 52). SIRC is generally acknowledged to have a fairly comprehensive library of books, periodicals, reports, dissertations and audio-visual material, but does not attempt to collect everything that is published in sport. The main emphasis of the collection is on top-level and international sport, the Olympic Games, disabled, doping and sport sciences (Shoebridge 1992, 10).

In 2000 the Library provided free membership for the NSAs to capture a wider readership and participation from the athletes, officials and coaches. About 30 NSAs responded positively to this scheme (SSC 2001, 50). The Library began to acquire books in the areas of sports science, strength and conditioning. During 2005 it began to subscribe the CARL library automation system with two OPAC terminals. At the same time users can access its catalogue online 24 hours a day via the internet (Lim-Yeo 2006, 405-407). Table shows the development of the Library in the deployment of staff and the increase in its print and non-print collection for the years 1996, 2000 and 2006.

Table 2: Survey results of the Singapore Sports Council library in 1998, 2000 and 2006

1996	2000	2006
<b>Staff</b>		
Lily Poh City & Guilds, Asst. Cert. (Library Technician I)	Lily Poh, City & Guilds, Asst. Cert. (Higher Executive Officer)	Lily Poh (Manager)
1 para-professional 1 support staff	2 para-professionals 1 clerical staff	1 graduate without library qualifications 1 para-professional 1 clerical staff
<b>Membership</b>		
Library users: 1,500 registered users	Staff, office bearers of NSA, PE teachers, Club training instructors, SAF/Police training instructors, NIE-SPE lecturers, students, public	Members only
<b>Opening hours</b>		
Weekdays: 8.30 a.m.– 5.00 p.m. Saturdays: 8.30 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.	Weekdays: 8.30 a.m.– 5.00 p.m. Saturdays: 8.30 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.	Weekdays: 8.30 a.m.– 5.30 p.m. Saturdays: 8.30 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.
<b>Inter-library loan:</b> To local libraries		
<b>Document delivery:</b> To local libraries		



Collection		
Physical fitness, Physical Education, sports & recreation	Sports and recreation, sports science, fitness programmes and sports participation reports.	Physical Education, recreation, games, sports sciences, exercises and physical fitness, strength & conditioning
<b>Books:</b> 15,000 volumes	17,000 volumes	19,000 volumes
10,000 titles	12,000 titles	13,000 titles
<b>Periodicals:</b> 300 titles	310 titles	340 titles
<b>Serials, bound:</b> 2,000 volumes	2,200 volumes	2,500 volumes
<b>AV materials:</b> 800 items	1,118 titles	1,500 titles
<b>Special collection:</b> SEAP/SEA Games, Asian and Olympic Games collection.		
<b>Newspaper clipping files:</b> 1,000 volume		
Sports related activities in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Hong Kong/China		
Wingate classification		
Library automation system		
Image II Library Management System	Image II Library Management System	CARL solution (2 OPAC work stations)
Sources: Lim-Yeo 1996, 180; Koh and Choy 2000, 303-305; Lim-Yeo 2006, 405-407.		

### Third phase of development (2010 – 2014): shifting to a temporary site

In 2010 the Library shifted to a temporary location when National Stadium demolished in 2010. Its bounded periodicals collection was kept in a warehouse and was inaccessible to users. Nevertheless most of books and current periodicals, including all its audio-visual materials were kept in the open shelves. The Library was closed in March 2014 to be relocated at the Singapore Sports Hub. It was a period when not all its information could be made available to its users.

### Singapore Sports Hub Library: Discussion

In 2014 the SSC was dissolved and a new organisation Sport Singapore was established. The SSC Library was outsourced to Civica Library Solutions vendor to managed the library at the Sport Hub scheduled to open in June the same year. It will be known as the Singapore Sports Hub Library. The library consists of two levels, with a combined floor space of 1,508 square metres. It is expected to have an opening collection of 80,000 sports and recreation books (Low 2013, 50; Civica 2014). This is a three-fold increase of the current collection of about 20,000 books. The researchers are no idea of what the new library will be as very little information were made available so far. Nevertheless they are providing the findings and recommendations of their research in the areas of Staffing, collection development, types of uses and provision of services.

### Library personnel

The person-in-charge of the Library Madam Lily Poh has been working for 32 years (1982-2014) starting as a Library Technician and later, became a Manager. She was supported by a para-professional and a clerk (Table 1 and Table 2). Little is known about the staffing Singapore Sports Hub Library which is four times the size of the current Library in terms of collection and five times more in terms of floor area. It is likely that the staff requirements will be more than twice from the previous library. Ideally the



head of the library should be a professional librarian with dual qualifications in library and information studies and sports studies. The lower level staff should at least have diploma or certificate qualification in information studies to be able to perform their roles effectively.

### **Audio-visual collection**

The SSC is the only sports library in Singapore with the largest collection of videocassettes relating to sport matches of major sports like football, tennis and badminton, sports instructional programmes, sports injuries and the multi-sports events like the SEA Games, Asian Games and the Olympic Games (SSC n.d.). However, it is faced with many copyright difficulties in the conversion into digital format. Therefore the new staff probably have to keep the old machines for the videocassettes to be viewed.

### **Collection development**

In 1992 Foskett and Hill (1992, vi) mentioned that although there is a growing tendency to record information in electronic media and to leave it there for distribution via electronic networks of one sort or another, the traditional media are still in use. This is particularly relevant in the provision of sports information in Singapore, Southeast Asia as well as in Asia where no known research has been done the sports information industry. It is likely to be under developed because there are no information providers or publishers in this area.

### **Special collections**

The SSC Library is the only library in Singapore that the full collection of the official publications of the South East Asian Peninsula Games (1959-1975) and the South East Asian Games (1977-2013). However, the official publications and programmes of the Asian and Olympic Games are not chronologically complete.

### **Bibliography on history of sports in Singapore and Malaysia**

The Library did have publications and books about the history of sports clubs in Singapore and Malaysia. There are books about the history of the Singapore Cricket Club, Singapore Recreation Club, Selangor Club and Singapore Swimming Club. However, these were not complete as there were no publications or comprehensive records about the history of the Penang Cricket Club, Penang Recreation Club, Malacca Cricket Club, Malacca Recreation Club and the Perak Club. It would be useful for the Singapore Sports Hub Library to do a bibliography on the history of sports in Singapore and Malaysia because of the shared history of many of these clubs and associations during the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

### **Special collections for specific sports**

There is no systematic collection of official programmes for specific popular sports like badminton or football. For example, as far as the researchers are aware no libraries in Singapore have collected the official programmes of the Malaya and later Malaysian



Inter-State football tournaments from the 1920s to the present period. It is also rare to find any library in Singapore to have the official publication of the badminton Thomas and Uber Cup finals from 1948 to 2012. As a consolation the SSC Library is the only library that has World Badminton, the official magazine of the International Badminton Federation published in 1983 to the late 1990s. Therefore the researchers hoped that the Singapore Sports Hub Library look into the collection development of specific sports.

### **Newspaper cuttings**

Newspapers are an important source of topical sports information that is sometimes neglected (Shoebridge 1992, 18; Sikes 2011). In fact the nineteenth and early twentieth century newspapers of Singapore are a rich repository of Singapore sports history and records not fully utilised at the moment (Khoo 1985). In 1995 it was reported that the Library maintained a collection of 750 newspaper clipping files on local and international events. In addition, a special collection of information files on sports development in Southeast Asia was compiled for reference (SSC 1996, 39). In the following years it was reported that the press cuttings amounted to 2,000 volumes (Lim-Yeo 1996, 180). This practice continued until 2014 when it was closed for transferred to the Sports Hub. However, all the files were not displayed in the open shelves and it would be difficult for users to identify and retrieve these files when they are not indexed for easy reference. Furthermore then newspaper sources are from the local daily newspapers like the Straits Times and Today, providing mainly local news and international news published in the local newspapers. To collect sports content about other Southeast Asian countries, the SSC will have to subscribe to daily newspapers like the New Straits Times, The Star from Malaysia, BOLA, Kompas, Jakarta Post from Indonesia and the Bangkok Post from Thailand.

### **A library for the NSAs**

At the moment, the major NSAs in Singapore, like the Basketball Association of Singapore (BAS), Singapore Badminton Association (SBA), Singapore Bowling Federation (SBF), Football Association of Singapore (FAS), Netball Singapore, Singapore Athletic Association (SAA), Singapore Swimming Association (SSA), Singapore Table-Tennis Association (STTA) and Singapore Tennis Association (STA) (SSC 2012) do not have libraries and professional librarians to manage their information and archival records. The Singapore Sport Hub Library can perform the same function like the SIRC in Canada, buying sports information for the NSAs, and keeping them in the Library.

### **Creating a network of sports information professionals**

In the UK the Sport and Recreation Information Group (SPRIG) has done much to co-ordinate the work of sports information professionals and to improve awareness of sports information since its inception in 1984 (Shoebridge 1992, xviii). Presently, there are no similar organizations in Singapore or other Southeast Asian countries. Perhaps, the special interest groups at Library Association of Singapore (LAS) or other library associations in Southeast Asia could think about forming a network of librarians looking at sports information as an important subject and vocation.



## CONCLUSION

The history and development of the SCC Library can be seen in three phases. During Phase 1 (1974-1997), the Library was under the Information and Research Division. Its book collection grew rapidly from 1,810 books in 1974 to 6,697 books in 1982. About one thousand books were added annually from 1982 to 1989 (Table 1). There were a total of 16,270 books in 1997 (SSC 1997, 47). Its journal titles increase two fold, from 100 titles in 1974 to 260 titles in 1989 (Table 1). The journal titles increased to 314 in 1997 (SSC 1997, 47). The users types of users began to expand from staff of the Council to members of the SPEA, NSAs, students of the College of Physical Education (SSC 1977, 30), teachers, coaches, sports administrators, physical educators, researchers and sportsmen and women (SSC 1981, 32).

Phase 2 (1998-2009) began in 1998 when the Library was placed under the Council's Management Services Division. This was the period when the library began to automate its system and introduced the usage of specialised electronic database like SPORT DISCUS CD-ROM to its users. During the Phase 3 (2010 – 2014) period the Library shifted to a temporary location and could not operate fully because of the limited space and many of its bounded journals were kept in a closed warehouse. The new Singapore Sports Hub Library is expected to be opened in the middle of 2014. The authors have made suggestions to the staffing and collection development needs of the Library. The Library has the potential to serve the various NSAs as well as be a place for sports information professionals to gather and network.

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